THE EVERLASTING ARMS.

A sermon preached by Edward Mason, at Farmersville, Ohio.

TEXT: Underneath the everlasting arms. Deut. 33 : 27.

In the stillness of the night, while the inmates of a house were buried in sleep, the alarm of fire was raised. The flames were making rapid progress, and the lower part of the building was soon consumed and escape from the upper stories entirely cut off. All the family but one little boy were safe. This little fellow finding that he was too late to escape by the staircase had found his way through the blinding smoke to a window and was seen hanging by his hands from the window sill on the outside. He felt that he was so far from the ground that he was afraid to let go his hold and drop. His father got underneath the boy and shouted to him, "Drop, my son, father will catch you." And without any hesitation, recognizing the voice, and knowing that the strong, loving arms of his father were stretched out uuderneath him, he let go and was safely caught. So beneath us are the everlasting arms of a loving Father. They are ever outstretched to catch us while hanging in the midst of great dangers, and if we will only trust to his love and strength, let go our hold of these weak and temporary things to which we cling so tenaciously, we will find a refuge in his embrace.

Moses will ever take a prominent place in the roll of heroes in the Lord's cause. Our text introduces him to us just as he is to take his last farewell of the people whom he had faithfully led for the last forty years, through all kinds of dangers and trials. His great life work was done, and in obedience to the Lord, was about to ascend Mount Pisgah to end his earthly career, in view of the promised land. Before taking his leave, he called the tribes before him and gave them advice and encouragement. In this benediction the piety of Moses was brought out very prominently. He takes no credit to himself, but points them to the Lord, whose greatness and goodness they had so often seen and felt. He is their sure refuge, and underneath all the dangers and changes of the past, present and future are the everlasting arms of Jehovah. He had supplied all their wants and cared for them with unremitting constancy. This, indeed, has been the experience of men of God of all ages, when they have reviewed the providence of God. In all their toil and danger the Eternal God has been their refuge and underneath them are the everlasting arms. But, this morning it will pay us to look at our text in its broadest application, and we will find it true in relation to the realms of nature, providence and grace.

First, then, we will notice our text in relation to the realm of nature. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." This is the deathblow to the false theories of Atheistic science. I know of no doctriene either more absurd or more impious than that of fatalism—a doctrine which shuts out of the universe an intelligent first cause, and makes all events the result of a blind and irresistible necessity. Evolution and development are now taught without a God. "Protoplasm," "Fire-dust" and "eternity of matter" are brought forward now to prove that the first verse of the Bible is a falsehood. The "everlasting arms" are entirely excluded. The infidel has no other law but chance. All his grand theories for the great works of nature above, beneath and around us can be summed up in the one word —chance. Without the guiding had of a Master, and the designing mind of an Architect, what else can it be but chance? Evolution without a God, or the law of nature without a God is nothing more or less than chance. The Bible gives us the key to all these mysteries. Whether we look at the starry heavens, the ocean depths, the snow-capped mountains, the waving forests, the verdant hillsides, the luxuriant valleys or even the mechanism of our own wonderful frames, the fact that underneath them are the everlasting arms puts all the guess-work theories of the atheistic science in the shade.

It is a great task to account for all the beauty and wonderful harmony of nature without acknowledging the wisdom and power of God as the first cause. And it is strange that men will attempt the undertaking. Science, or the study of nature, reveals beyond a doubt the master-hand of a divine Creator. I take the stand, this morning, that there are developed in the discoveries and researches of science, traces of design and wisdom that prove not merely that there was, but that there is a God. That was an unanswerable argument that a poor, unlearned Arab used when he was asked by an infidel philosopher, how he knew there was a God? The man of the desert took him to the door of the tent and said: "You may as well ask me how I know that a camel was at this door during the night. It is because I see his tracks in the sand. So when I see the sun and moon travel through the heavens above us, I see the footprints of a God."

Look at the heavens above us for a moment. The fact that our sun is the center of a solar system is not a very ancient discovery. Just conceive this, that our sun with his solar system is only a little group around another central sun, who has a thousand solar systems around him. And this central sun, with his thousand solar systems, is only another group round another central sun, in tne vast starry host that shines in the expanse above. We see but the sentinels and the outposts of that mighty glistening army. These, with unmistakable certainty, silently tell us that underneath are the everlasting arms.

Skeptics cannot account for the grand arrangement which we see everywhere around us in nature, therefore they claim it is due merely to accident. Mercury is forty millions of milles from the sun. He does not want a moon, and by a very lucky accident. the infidels will say, he has not got any. Venus is sixty millions of miles from the sun and does not need a moon, and by the same peculiar chance, she has none. The earth, however, is ninety-five millions of miles from the sun, and by an unexplainable accident, the earth has a moon, just at the very point at which she could not well do without one. These are very like the acts of Deity. So, again, Jupiter is five hundred millions of miles from the sun, and by a lucky accident, he has got four moons; exactly proportionate to his immense distance from the sun. Surely this beautiful and wise arrangement tells us there is an Omniscient God underneath all.

Supposing that we throw a fount of type on this floor. Is there the remotest shadow of a chance of those type arranging themselves so that a book could be printed? Certainly not. In ten million ages the type would be found there unmoved unless some one with the power and will would move them. A pile of bricks taken and thrown in a heap on the street will remain there unless interferred with. If we should see those bricks arranged into a house we instinctively infer the presence of a designing mind. Or, to take Paley's beautiful illustration, if we went into a desert and found a watch, and upon opening it, we saw all the wheels and cranks apparently in opposition to each other, yet all working in perfect harmony, we must conclude that it was so arranged by some one. The watch never put itself into such a condition. If we inspect the universe from the loftiest star that shines above us, down to the minutest insect that flutters in the sunbeam, and if we cannot see the footprints of the great Creator, we are troubled with a very blind mind or with a very bigoted heart. The Bible tells us that it is "the fool" who hath said in his own heart, "there is no God."

While we are speaking of arrangement and harmony, we might call attention to the design displayed in the atmosphere around us. How the air we breath is purified by the plants and waters. In fact the more we study the universe, the more we are convinced that underneath are the everlasting arms. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" is the only solution to all this harmony and arrangement. Underneath the soil that quickens the seed, underneath the whole mighty universe, underneath all that sustains and developes life are the everlasting arms.

Next, we will notice our text in relation to providence. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." This is the doctrine taught us in the Bible. As in the realm of nature, so also in the affairs of men there is no such thing as chance. The history of nations are under the guidance of Jehovah. He rules among the inhabitants of earth and heaven, and makes even the wrath of men to praise him. It is impossible to turn over the leaves of history and fail to see that the everlasting arms are underneath. The evidence of a presiding Providence in in the rise and fall of empires, in the policy of cabinets. in the exploits of conquerors and in the biographies of individuals is just as patent to a reflecting Christian mind, as is the sun to the outward eye in the unfolding bud of spring, and in the rich blossoms of summer. Were God to withdraw his providential guidance from the world, man would soon become a fiend, angels would flee from this earth as from the abode of demons, and Satan in all his hellish majesty would reign unmolested over sea and land.

We find that in the history of the world, man takes a prominent part. Indeed, man is the most wonderful as well as the most perplexing phenomenon of history. We find angels have their work in unfolding the affairs of men—opening its mysterious seals, sounding its awful trumpets and pouring forth its dreadful vials. Satan, too, plays a part in the great drama of history—ever active to suggest what is evil, arrest what is good and overthrow what is holy, pure and divine. But above all, God looks on with a jealous eye, turning and guiding all the wheels and cranks of events to his infinite glory; yea, even bringing into subjection all obstinate and opposing forces, so that all works toward a grand and glorious result. But many would be glad if they could argue and reason and talk God out of history. They would like to exclude him in every sense from the affairs of men, so that they would be free from the awful responsibility that rests on them by his presence. They wish there were no God, and they try their best to believe there is no God, and on this principle of no-God all their actions are based. This kind of people is not merely satisfied with their infidel ideas of God, but they manifest a decided animosity which often culminates in a mean hostility to the teachings of the Bible. They are not merely atheists, but in the bitterest sense of the word they are anti-theists. But in spite of all this, nature and providence tells us that underneath are the everlasting arms.

Very small straws turn the whole course of the stream of events. The most insignificant events have changed the history of continents. An acorn is a little thing of itself, and if laid on one side, it moulders and corrupts; but cast into the earth, it germinates and grows up into the mighty oak—the monarch of the woods and in due time, it is the strength of the gallant ship that rides the ocean and connects distant continents and carries the message of salvation to them that are in darkness. Everything must have a beginning. The sources of the mighty rivers that water the luxuriant valleys, and carry blessings with them through the length and breadth of continents, have their source in some insignificant streamlet or an obscure mountain side. When Lawrence Coster, in 1423, while amusing children by carving their names on the bark of the trees, conceived the idea of making wooden type, had no idea of the grand result of this thought to the human family. It is true that Egyptians and Chinese, hundreds of years before this, carved letters on blocks and printed from the blocks, but this Dutchman of Haerlem, was the first one to tie the letters into words and sentences and print from them. Our great printing appliances are only improvements of this simple invention. It is hard to conceive the blessing the art of printing has been to the world.

Then again, the half-starved son of a poor and obscure miner, while attending a charity school, used to go out in the morning and sing for his breakfast. This boy became a learned man and a Romish monk. At the right time, in the darkest days of the Dark Ages, this man, in the person of Martin Luther, struck such a mighty blow at the Papal throne, that its force was felt in every country in Christendom, and from which the Romish church has never recovered. In the invention of printing and the commencement of the greatest religious revolution the world ever saw, we see the "everlasting arms". How beneficial the former was to the latter, and how poorly and slowly would the Gospel have been disseminated had it not been for the invention of Lawrence Coster and John Guttenberg.

We see the footprints of Almighty God in the history of our own country. How the imposition of a few taxes caused the building up of one of the greatest nations upon earth, which has been an asylum and a city of refuge to the poor and oppressed of the whole world. And when we consider the mighty strides that Christianity has taken since, we must undoubtedly give all the glory to God. There is no greater proof that underneath the history of nations are the everlasting arms than the victory of unarmed Christianity—the onward march of the insulted, resisted and denounced Gospel. Starting at the empty tomb of their risen Lord, the first ambassadors of Christianity went forth to subdue the earth, with no patronage but an open world, and no help but him who had promised to be with them. Persecution fanned its flames. The winds of heaven wafted to distant lands the testimonies of the saints. All forces helped Christianity. All winds bore her onward. Her record in all lands is the imperishable evidence of the everlasting arms. Sin has tried to burst the restraints of the Gospel; and the fierce and violent have done their best to tear up by the roots that tree of life whose shadow gives protection even to them. But like the banyan tree, the more its upper limbs have been cut and hacked, the wider and deeper the under roots have spread. God stands by the old tree, and though we see him not, he protects it from devastation, and even the false and the vicious, though undesignedly, were made to glorify his name. I know of no more eloquent proof of the everlasting arms being underneath the affairs of men, than that all the self-created architects have failed to build up a lie, and all the tortures, dungeons and stakes of the Inquisition have failed to burn down one truth. Truth is not consumed with her martyrs. When the iron hoof of infidelity shall trample underfoot all the church houses, shrines and holy places of Christianity, there shall still be left in the bosom of every true Christian the altar of love and faith, which man nor devils can neither mar nor destroy for underneath are the everlasting arms.

Lastly, we will notice our text in relation to the realm of grace, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." Man is an independent being. He would like to be able to purchase his way into eternal happiness by good works. So many of us depend entirely upon rites and ceremonies and sacrifices. It is a hard lesson for us to learn that of themselves they can avail us nothing. We must endeavor to clear away the rubbish that has been accumulating for ages and get down to the bed-rock—the "everlasting arms." We hear much about the cross of the God-man Jesus, we meditate and talk and theorize about the blood of Christ, but back of all this is the love of God, underneath all are the everlasting arms. Yes, underneath the glorious Gospel of his grace are the everlasting arms that make the Gospel victorious over the deep-rooted enmity of sin. We may build up ideals of our own, decorate them with the ornaments of morality and civilization. We may extemporize creeds and even embelish them with Gospel truths. We may be earnest and sincere and zealous in the performance of the outward duties of the church, but if underneath it all are not found a firm reliance on the everlasting arms, then all is vain; we are merely swinging in empty space. The faith of the individual must rest solely on God, and not on penance, though it be in the shape of good works. We are saved by grace. Salvation is a free gift.

The arms of God are our fortress and strength. The arm is suggestive of power, therefore we see, by the expression of our text, the Divine power of God underneath all. These arms will support us—keep us from falling. Enfolded in their embrace we are safe from evil and danger. While they will hold us in their powerful grasp, they will not crush the feeblest. How large are these arms? They encircle the whole universe of earth and heaven. They stretch out under all things, above, beneath. The nations of the earth through all the centuries of time will find a refuge in their embrace. The arms of the Lord are stretched in mercy to save and not to destroy. They are "everlasting." Let us rejoice, those arms will never tire nor faint. Human power is frail and very limited. We cannot make a prop that will support us through the trials and storms ahead. We may fortify ourselves upon human mandates and feel perfectly safe. But human mandates, especially if they make the word of God of none effect, is a sandy refuge in the day of Judgment. No, let us lean on the arms that never grow weak or weary. That was a glorious thought of the little boy, whose little invalid sister had but recently died. One day he asked his mother why she looked so sad and whether she was not glad that Jesus had taken his little sister away? The mother wanted to know why? "I often noticed," he replied, "that when you were holding her during her long illness, you looked so very tired. Now Jesus will hold little sister in his arms, and should he get tired, he will hand her round to all the angels. So that no one will get tired in heaven." Let us have that confidence in the everlasting love of God.

The arms that hold up the universe were stretched out and nailed to a cruel Roman cross. These same arms are now mercifully stretched out to save you and me. These arms have already spanned the oceans, and are pushing their way into the jungles of India; they have scaled the great wall of China and are now at work in the benighted land of Confucius, Africa, the isles of the sea, South America, and the great forests of the west, and even the countries of perpetual snow will all be gathered in when these arms close again. The arm of the Lord will not be withdrawn from supporting the earth, until the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God give us grace to rely on these everlasting arms. Amen.

A Beautiful Sentiment.

Sorrow sobers us and makes the mind genial. And in sorrow we love and trust our friends more tenderly, and the dead become dearer to us. And just as the stars shine out in the night so there are blessed faces that look at us in our grief, though before their features were fading from our recollection. Suffering! Let no man dread it too much, because it is better for him, and will help to make him sure of being immortal. It is not in the bright happy days, but only in the solemn night, that other worlds are to be seen shining in the long, long distance. And it is in sorrow—the night of the soul—that we see the farthest, and know ourselves natives of infinity and sons and daughters of the Most High.